

## **COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH LEADS FIGHTBACK AGAINST COVID-19**

Australia's health and medical research translation centres are all moving rapidly to assist co-ordination of scientific responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With collaborative networks that span most of Australia, the seven Advanced Health Research and Translation Centres and three Centres for Innovation in Regional Health have been able to bring together researchers, clinicians and health service leaders to identify research priorities and fast track projects.

The translation centres are accredited by the National Health and Medical Research Council and funded by the Commonwealth under the Medical Research Future Fund.

The peak body for the translation centres, the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA), says its members have the ability to quickly and strategically mobilise the diverse skill sets needed to address the issues confronting health services as a result of COVID-19.

"AHRA is being asked to help and we are responding," said AHRA Chairman Professor Christopher Levi.

"We can speed up Australia's ability to find answers to clinical and population health questions and implement solutions at scale."

Some states have charged their translation centres with leading the medical research response to the coronavirus.

The Western Australian Minister for Health has asked the Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN) to co-ordinate the state's COVID-19 research efforts.

"We are the only body that could have combined the research efforts of our universities, hospitals, health department, medical research institutes and Pathwest in such a timely and coordinated way" said the Executive Director of WAHTN, Professor Gary Geelhoed.

In South Australia, the COVID-19 Taskforce directly asked Health Translation SA and the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute to lead the synthesis of evidence and data modelling to inform service planning and decision making as well as to coordinate research activities across the state.

Elsewhere, the translation centres are bringing together medical engineers and clinicians to adapt and test new ventilation masks for COVID-19 patients and prototype personal protective equipment for healthcare workers on the frontline.

They are also helping clinical trials managers and hospital research managers to fast-track the commencement of multiple research projects and enable rapid, adaptive trials of novel diagnostic and therapeutic options that address unmet needs.

The Executive Director of Sydney Health Partners, Professor Garry Jennings says translation centres have formed networks of key people to build links between clinical research, prevention and treatments.

“By linking key research and health services leaders and their teams together to address the right questions, AHRA’s efforts can make a real difference,” he said.

Monash Partners’ Executive Director, Professor Helena Teede, says the crisis has highlighted the value of research integration into healthcare.

“Never before in Australia’s history has there been a more important time for greater integration between research and clinical care,” she said.

The Executive Director of Melbourne Academic Centre for Health, Professor Sir John Savill, says the co-ordination is crucial.

“In this highly pressured and time-critical situation there is a risk that lack of co-ordination could waste precious efforts across Australia’s many universities, medical research institutes and health services,” he said.

“Governments and health services are recognising that our translation centres are uniquely positioned to steer a more integrated and cohesive approach.”

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### **About AHRA**

The Australian Health Research Alliance is the peak body representing Australia’s network of seven Advanced Health Research and Translation Centres (AHRTCs) and three Centres for Innovation in Regional Health (CIRHs).

The Centres are working on a wide range of projects locally as well as working together nationally on key national system level initiatives and research networks. These activities are funded by the Australian Government’s Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and align with national and government priorities.

[ahra.org.au](http://ahra.org.au)

### **About the Translation Centre Initiative**

The core aim of the AHRTC and CIRH initiative is to encourage excellent health research and translation in Australia by bringing together researchers, healthcare providers, education and training to improve the health and well-being of patients and the populations they serve.

### **Contacts**

#### **For media enquiries:**

Mark Mathot  
Media and Communications Manager  
Sydney Health Partners  
Ph: 0403 052 522  
E: [mark.mathot@sydney.edu.au](mailto:mark.mathot@sydney.edu.au)

**For interviews:**

**brisbane diamantina  
health partners**

*Innovative healthcare through partnerships*



- Mr David Bunker  
Executive Director, Brisbane Diamantina Health Partners  
Ph: 0433 366 512 E: [DavidBunker@diamantina.org.au](mailto:DavidBunker@diamantina.org.au)



- Chips Mackinolty  
Executive Director, Researcherneye Wappayalawangka, Central  
Australian Academic Health Science Network  
Ph: 0448 168 464 E: [chips.mackinolty@caahsn.org.au](mailto:chips.mackinolty@caahsn.org.au)



- Professor Steve Wesselingh  
Research Director, Health Translation SA  
Ph: 0409 058 074 E: [steve.wesselingh@sahmri.com.au](mailto:steve.wesselingh@sahmri.com.au)



- Professor Christopher Levi  
Executive Director, Maridulu Budyari Gumal SPHERE and Chair,  
Australian Health Research Alliance  
Ph: 0418 344 016 E: [Christopher.levi@unsw.edu.au](mailto:Christopher.levi@unsw.edu.au)



- Professor Sir John Savill  
Executive Director, Melbourne Academic Centre for Health  
Ph: 03 9035 4960 E: [john.savill@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:john.savill@unimelb.edu.au)



- Professor Helena Teede  
Executive Director, Monash Partners  
Ph: 0407 005 737 E: [helena.teede@monash.edu](mailto:helena.teede@monash.edu)



- Professor Christine Jorm  
Director, NSW Regional Health Partners  
Ph: 0416 149 477 E: [christine.jorm@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:christine.jorm@health.nsw.gov.au)



- Professor Garry Jennings AO  
Executive Director, Sydney Health Partners  
Ph: 0419 770 043 E: [garry.jennings@sydney.edu.au](mailto:garry.jennings@sydney.edu.au)



- Professor Ian Wronski AO  
Chair, Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre  
Ph: 07 4781 5036 E: [taahc@jcu.edu.au](mailto:taahc@jcu.edu.au)



- Professor Gary Geelhoed  
Executive Director, Western Australian Health Translation Network  
Ph: 08 6151 0875 E: [Gary.Geelhoed@uwa.edu.au](mailto:Gary.Geelhoed@uwa.edu.au)